

Grand Quilt Guild 2012 - 2013 Block of the Month Option #2

You will create a block each month, whether by stitching it, cutting and gluing fabrics or coloured papers, using coloured pencils or just collecting fabric scraps that represent the challenges. (This is really a workshop spread out over the quilting year!)

Each block will represent one of many colour combinations, and it is hoped that they will serve as inspiration for you in the future, as you plan your various projects. You might well decide to use only fabrics which you already own, or you might decide to visit a friend and beg for a few inches of ones that you lack.

One idea is to take your completed blocks to a colour printer and run off a few copies. This will enable you to play with the paper ones to decide on a pattern that could be a quilt for someone some day. File your original block with the paper reproductions in your file, and mark it with its title.

Each challenge will require you to use hues which are certain distances apart on the colour wheel. You will also be able to select a neutral background if you wish. To assist you with the challenge, sort your fabrics into colour families. Each hue into two piles.... plain and print. Also, a collection of soft neutrals... white on white, creams, beiges, grays, or a very pale or very dark value of any hue within your chosen fabrics. Viewed from a distance, print background fabrics appear to be solid; close to the quilt, the effect is different. There is the visual surprise of the subtle patterning that enhances other prints. The background affects the value and intensity of the fabrics surrounding it. The main colours may seem brighter or darker next to a pale background; they may appear lighter next to a dark background. It is interesting to try both lights and darks to see the different effects. Black may be especially effective.

The Six Foot Rule:

Always stand back at least six feet when assessing fabrics or blocks during the creative process. Place bolts beside each other in the store and stand back. Don't fall into the trap of being right next to a fabric searching for the certain green of a tiny leaf. From a distance, **it will not read as that green!**

Colour Theory#1: Monochromatic September

Using only one colour can be a challenge, but it is quite rewarding when you realize that you probably have all you need in your stash. A block that responds well to this limitation is the Log Cabin. The centre square does not count. (We make up our own rules!) Using lights-moving-to-mediums, and mediums-moving-to-darks, create an interesting block of a size that you like.

Square-up as you go along to avoid pain at the end!

A colour-wheel eventually comes in handy during this exercise. It will keep you on track for the rest of the challenges. Just as you're reaching for a fabric that you know would look good in the block, your notes to yourself and the colour wheel will make you stop and search for one that complies with the challenge. Put together your wheel before next meeting.

Notes to keep in mind whilst you audition & select fabrics and build blocks

VALUE

Value is extremely important in working with colour in cloth. Value defines shapes within a pattern and provides contrast. The Log Cabin is a good example: without the contrasts of light and dark values within the individual blocks, the design would be lost. To determine the values within a block or a piece of work, make a black and white copy of it. A hue has many values... and they can be changed to obtain good effect.

In order to save fabric, use graph paper to create a block of a smaller size than the ones needed for your quilt. Cut and glue-stick the fabrics which you are considering, and try various blocks. A colour copier can show you what they would look like when grouped together. A black and white copier will show you the contrast of values. This method enables you to make changes before you cut actual pattern pieces and fabric pieces and before you do any actual sewing.

Definitions:

'Shade' means that black has been added to the pure colour (e.g. navy blue, maroon)

'Tint' means that white has been added to the pure colour (e.g. pink and other pastels)

'Tone' means that grey has been added to the pure colour (e.g. mauve, olive, beige.)

PRINTS

In your examination of print fabrics, you notice many variations.

Size (scale) of the motifs

Generally, fabrics work best together when they vary in scale. Scale is the term used to compare the relative size of one print design to another. The size relationship can change as fabrics are intermixed. Whenever possible, include large-scaled, medium-scaled and small-scaled prints in your quilts.

What may be a medium-scaled print in one group of fabrics can be large-scaled in another collection, and small-scaled in yet another. When fabric design of the same scale are placed side by side, their designs bleed visually into one another. With calico prints this usually presents a busy, distracting look. It is best to vary the print scale unless you are keeping your scales similar for a specific design reason. For instance, traditional scrap quilts can be very successful when created with no regard to scale. The busyness of alike-scaled fabrics evokes a charmingly quaint quality in this type of quilt.

Each of us has our own scale size preference. In your fabric collection, you will see a preponderance of one scale over the others. When you realize this, you can be conscious of this tendency when buying fabrics. Initially, it may be difficult to buy prints in a scale that feels uncomfortable to you. However, once you begin using varied scales with relative ease, you will notice that intermingling fabric scales intensifies and enhances your design.

VALUE of the hues. The pure colour highest in value is yellow because it is the lightest colour in the colour wheel and the hue closest to white. In contrast, the pure colour lowest in value is violet, because it is the darkest colour on the colour wheel and the one nearest to black. Bluegreen and orange-red are considered middle-valued colours in their pure form because they are about halfway between white and black in their value. Remember that colours appear to change their values as they relate to other colours.

STYLE OF THE MOTIFS... e.g. floral, geometric, 'cute', formal, etc.

Along with scale, it is important to vary the design elements in various calico fabrics. All floral motifs, all geometric prints, or all pin dots causes too much repetition; this invites monotony. So incorporate as many different types of designs into your quilt as fabric choices and design elements will allow.

If you must include several fabrics of similar patterns or images, arrange them so that they are not adjacent to each other. A variety of patterns increases your quilt's interest and beauty. As with scale, you may find you prefer a certain type of pattern. As long as you know this you can monitor your buying habits to ensure a varied assortment of patterns to choose from when creating your quilts.

Of course, cartoon style kittens and formal paisleys do not go well together. Such motif styles as geometric, floral, ethnic, etc. may well determine your quilt's final appearance.

Problem Print Fabrics

Dominant Prints

Certain prints cause problems because they do not blend well with other fabrics. Checks, stripes and large static geometric designs, paisleys, and strongly sophisticated marbled fabrics, for example, tend to pull out of a design. Because of the visual dominance over other prints, they are rarely harmonious. If you use any of these in your work, be aware of their limitations and the possible design complications they may impose. Your goal is to make a visually successful surface design. Include these difficult fabrics only when they impart a particular image you wish to evoke.

Prints with too many colours

If you use calico fabrics, it is best to choose those that include only one or two colour families. This results in a workable, harmonious effect. For best results, avoid designs that include incongruous colour placement, unless you want a busy look, or if a multicoloured fabric is exactly what you need to achieve a certain illusion

Experimenting with Quilt Blocks

Hue: If you have a colour or colours in mind for your quilt, select a Focus Fabric to get started. Notice its value, intensity and scale. Is there a contrast within the fabric?

Value: Select other fabrics to combine with the Focus Fabric, including the background. Look at their values. Do you have value contrast: Think about light, medium, dark. Do you need an accent? Do you need a deep dark to pull it all together?

Intensity: How bright or dull are your colours? Do you need to tone down a vivid grouping? Do you need a high-intensity spark? Remember, intensity does not alter value. You can keep the same value while you change the saturation or degree of brightness.

Relativity: What effects are your choices having on one another? Remember that hues alter and values change, depending on what surrounds them. Position the fabrics in different ways to see the changes that occur as you move them around.

Scale: adds interest to the quilt, but the prints should relate well to one another, and to the solids that you select. Check the size of the prints. Do you have variety and contrast, or are they the same? Do they relate well to one another?

Layout: Notice the types of visual texture you have selected. Do you have both random and repeat prints? Do they offer contrast, while at the same time reflecting unity of style or character? Do they show variety in coverage? How many categories are represented? Are any fabrics leaping out because they are too busy?

Harmony: Experiment with three or four harmonies before you make your final choice. Be willing to bring in additional hues as needed...(but not in the colour challenges of this exercise.)

Placement: Try your fabrics in different positions in the block. Move the lights and darks around until balance and contrast work well together.

Temperature: the relative coolness or warmth of a colour. Orange is warmest, blue coolest. Remember that colour is found in the fabric. It is your palette; your scissors are your paintbrush. Take the time and make the effort to explore all the possibilities. Be a little bit daring if you are conservative; dare more if you seek growth in your work. Try the untried, turn the rules upside down, take risks, be willing to fail and keep open to new ideas and experiences. You have learned about colour and fabric as you worked your way through the exercises, so you have practical knowledge to put to work. Think of these blocks as paving stones on the road to success. Their construction leads you toward discovery and confidence in combining colour and cloth.

Taken from: '*Colour and Cloth the quiltmaker's ultimate workbook*' by Mary Coyne Penders.

Stark White and High Contrasting Prints

White is the natural neutral in art using the tint scale. Because all tints are made from white, this is a natural partnership. Therefore, using an off-white with tints can deaden the art.

In other situations, however, stark white fabrics, like problem prints, can be distracting unless used carefully, because their strength can decrease your artwork's unity by pulling out visually. Before using pure white ask yourself if an off-white or other neutral might work better. A blush white - white with just a tinge of colour in it - is often a good substitute. If you use white without a specific purpose in mind, include it cautiously. But when white helps you obtain your design objectives, use it.

Highly contrasting hues in the same print can also be distracting. In most situations, these fabrics affect the work negatively because their visual contrast detracts from the artistic unity. Be aware of the fabrics and use them wisely.

For the most part, taken from 'The Magical Effects of Color' by Joen Wolfrom

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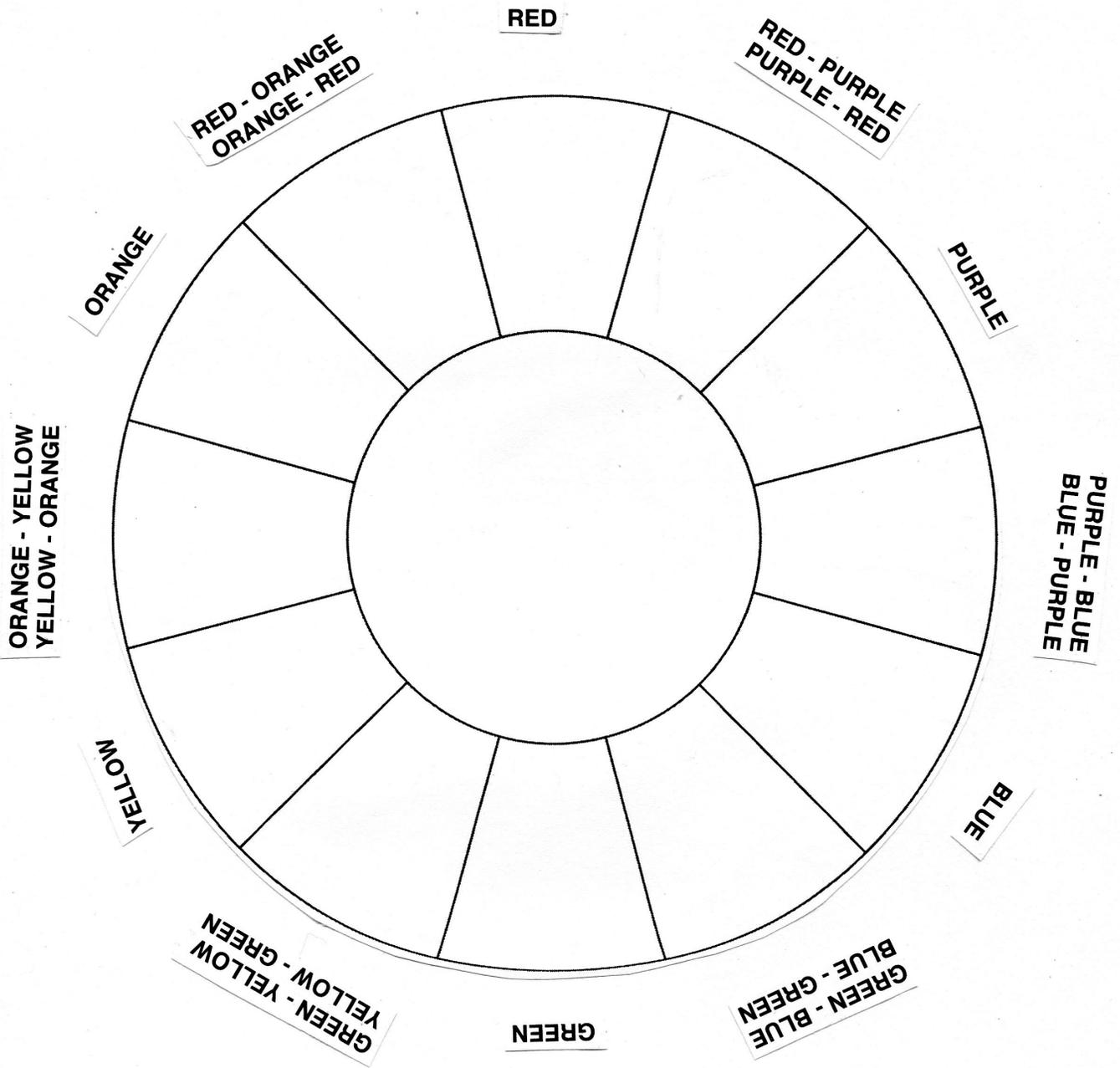
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MY COLOUR WHEEL
